

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 070234

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: ELAB, GR

SUBJECT: PACIFIC ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS (PAE)

1. PAE REPRESENTATIVES MADE CALLS RECENTLY AT PENTAGON AND DEPT TO REITERATE REQUEST THAT PAE EMPLOYEES BE ISSUED ALIEN REGISTRATION CARDS ("GREEN CARDS") CERTIFYING ELIGIBLE CONTRACTOR PERSONNEL AS MEMBERS OF CIVILIAN COMPONENT, THUS OBTAINING NEED FOR WORK PERMITS. PAE BASES ITS CLAIM FOR ALIEN REGISTRATION CARDS ON FACT THAT OTHER US FORCES CONTRACTOR PERSONNEL IN GREECE ARE ISSUED SUCH CARDS AND THAT ITS EMPLOYEES WERE BEING DISCRIMINATED AGAINST. THIS POSITION IS NOT WITHOUT MERIT, AND THE DEPT HAS BEEN UNABLE TO DISCOVER WHY HISTORICALLY A DISTINCTION HAS BEEN MADE IN THE CASE OF PAE. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE EMBASSY FILES ARE ALSO INCOMPLETE ON THIS SUBJECT.

2. DEPT IS AWARE THAT EMBASSY HAS WORKED DILIGENTLY TO
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ASSIST PAE EMPLOYEES TO OVERCOME GREEK BUREAUCRATIC ROADBLOCKS IN OBTAINING REQUIRED WORK PERMITS AND IN SO DOING WAS FOLLOWING AN ACCEPTED PRACTICE WHICH HAS EXISTED OVER SOME TIME, INCLUDING WITH THE CONTRACTOR WHO PRECEDED PAE. AS LONG AS THIS ARRANGEMENT WAS WORKING REASONABLY WELL, ESPECIALLY IN RECENT MONTHS, WE PREFERRED TO AVOID MAKING

AN OFFICIAL DEMARCHE TO GREEK AUTHORITIES TO ASSERT THAT, UNDER OUR INTERPRETATION OF EXISTING AGREEMENTS, PAE EMPLOYEES WERE MEMBERS OF THE CIVILIAN COMPONENT AND CONSEQUENTLY NOT REQUIRED TO OBTAIN WORK PERMITS.

3. NOW WE UNDERSTAND THAT NEW DIFFICULTIES HAVE ARISEN WITH REGARD TO WORK PERMITS. PAE CLAIMED IN RECENT MEETING IN DEPT THAT A NUMBER OF POSITIONS REMAIN UNFILLED BECAUSE OF THE INABILITY TO OBTAIN PERMITS AND THAT IT CANNOT TOLERATE THE SITUATION MUCH LONGER BECAUSE IT IS BEING DOCKED BY THE AIR FORCE FOR NON-FULFILLMENT OF CONTRACT.

4. IN VIEW OF FOREGOING, EMBASSY SHOULD APPROACH FOREIGN MINISTRY AT APPROPRIATE LEVEL ALONG FOLLOWING LINES: PAE HAS THE CIVIL ENGINEERING CONTRACT FOR US AIR FORCE BASES IN GREECE WHICH INCLUDES RESPONSIBILITY FOR BASE MAINTENANCE AND OTHER VITAL SERVICES; IN CONTRAST TO OTHER US CITIZEN EMPLOYEES AND THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS WORKING FOR FIRMS UNDER US MILITARY FORCES CONTRACT IN GREECE, PAE EMPLOYEES FALLING UNDER THIS CATEGORY HAVE BEEN REQUIRED TO OBTAIN GREEK WORK PERMITS; US COULD ACCEPT THIS SITUATION WHICH HAS EXISTED FOR SOME TIME, AS LONG AS SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT FUNCTIONED SMOOTHLY AND PAE COULD EFFECTIVELY CARRY OUT ITS CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS; HOWEVER, STARTING LAST YEAR, PAE BEGAN TO EXPERIENCE DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING WORK PERMITS FOR SOME OF ITS EMPLOYEES; THE SITUATION BECAME PARTICULARLY ACUTE AT IRAKLION, WHERE A NUMBER OF POSITIONS REMAINED OPEN FOR WEEKS AND CAUSED A REAL

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HARDSHIP AT THAT BASE; THE EMBASSY HAS WORKED WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY OVER A PERIOD OF MONTHS TO RESOLVE THE QUESTION AND PROBLEMS RELATING TO OBTAINING WORK PERMITS; DESPITE THESE EFFORTS, THE PROBLEM IS STILL WITH US AND THERE IS NEW EVIDENCE THAT IT WILL CONTINUE TO PLAGUE US AIR FORCE OPERATIONS UNLESS RELIEF IS FOUND; WHILE AN OCCASIONAL VACANCY CAN BE TOLERATED, THE MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM IS SUCH THAT IT IS AFFECTING THE AIR FORCE'S ABILITY TO PERFORM ITS FUNCTIONS IN GREECE.

5. EMBASSY SHOULD CONCLUDE PRESENTATION BY SEEKING GREEK AGREEMENT TO SOME FORM OF RELIEF. SPECIFICALLY, CAN ALIEN REGISTRATION CARDS BE ISSUED TO QUALIFYING PAE PERSONNEL AS IS DONE FOR OTHER CONTRACTOR PERSONNEL.

6. WHILE STRESSING THAT THE ISSUANCE OF ALIEN REGISTRATION CARDS IS OUR PREFERRED COURSE, EMBASSY SHOULD EXPLORE ANY OTHER FORM OF RELIEF WHICH WILL EASE CURRENT PROBLEMS. IT SHOULD BE EMPHASIZED THAT CORRECTIVE ACTION

MUST BE TAKEN IF WE ARE TO PREVENT CONTINUED HINDRANCE OF
US MILITARY OPERATIONS IN GREECE.
CHRISTOPHER

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